

New readers of *Militant*, books: Join SWP in campaigning!

BY JOHN STUDER

The *Militant* welcomes the 1,400 new subscribers to the paper, and the workers, young people and others who bought 999 books on working-class politics by leaders of the Social-

SWP SPEAKS IN INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

ist Workers Party. This represents an advance for the reach of the *Militant* and the Socialist Workers Party. We look forward to hearing from you.

The chart showing how the party did in the drive is printed below. Overall, SWP branches and Communist League branches in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.K. fell short of selling 1,400 books, which was half of the circulation goal. While a majority of party units made or surpassed their targets for *Militant* subscriptions, only six made or went over their book quotas.

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Fall Campaign to sell *Militant* subscriptions and books

Oct. 6 - Dec. 4 (Final)

| Country | Sub quota | Subs sold | Books quota | Books sold |
|------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| UNITED STATES | | | | |
| Albany | 115 | 107 | 115 | 72 |
| Atlanta | 85 | 97 | 85 | 62 |
| Chicago | 115 | 121 | 115 | 90 |
| Dallas | 50 | 51 | 50 | 54 |
| Lincoln | 15 | 17 | 15 | 15 |
| Los Angeles | 125 | 109 | 125 | 52 |
| Louisville | 30 | 31 | 30 | 32 |
| Miami | 40 | 24 | 40 | 29 |
| N. New Jersey | 35 | 42 | 35 | 35 |
| New York | 110 | 115 | 110 | 63 |
| Oakland | 85 | 97 | 85 | 76 |
| Philadelphia | 55 | 44 | 55 | 56 |
| Pittsburgh | 15 | 17 | 15 | 11 |
| Seattle | 90 | 93 | 90 | 47 |
| Twin Cities | 65 | 50 | 65 | 33 |
| Washington, D.C. | 80 | 63 | 80 | 64 |
| Total U.S. | 1,110 | 1,078 | 1,110 | 791 |
| Prisoners | 25 | 37 | | |
| UNITED KINGDOM | | | | |
| London | 60 | 64 | 60 | 64 |
| Manchester | 50 | 56 | 50 | 46 |
| Total U.K. | 110 | 120 | 110 | 110 |
| CANADA | | | | |
| Montreal | 50 | 48 | 50 | 35 |
| Vancouver | 45 | 49 | 45 | 35 |
| Total Canada | 95 | 97 | 95 | 70 |
| New Zealand | 40 | 40 | 30 | 24 |
| Australia | 30 | 32 | 15 | 4 |
| Total | 1,410 | 1,404 | 1,360 | 999 |

US rulers push Beijing for trade and tariff concessions

BY ROY LANDERSEN

At the behest of Washington, Canadian authorities arrested Meng Wanzhou, a top executive and daughter of the founder of the giant Chinese telecom company Huawei, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Dec. 1. This is the latest front in a wider conflict as Washington pushes back against Beijing's growing economic and political challenge.

The U.S. rulers are the world's dominant imperialist power, but one that has begun to decline. China's rapidly expanding capitalist economy is ascending, especially in Asia. But Washington remains on top and is using that position to alter the Chinese rulers' trade policies.

The U.S. capitalist rulers have made progress in their campaign to press Beijing to retreat. Chinese Vice Premier Liu He told U.S. officials Dec. 10 that the Chinese government has decided to cut its tariffs on U.S. auto imports from 40 to 15 percent. He also said they were considering increasing soybean imports and making changes to their "intellectual property" regulations — other steps Washington has demanded.

This is the most significant move by
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Working people win gains, dignity in French protests



Reuters/Regis Duvignau

'Yellow vests,' working people from small towns, countryside, win support for their struggle in Cissac-Medoc, France, Dec. 5. Sign at right says "Urgent, purchasing power, dignity for all."

Yellow vest actions continue, inspire workers worldwide

BY HUGO WILS

The over three-week-long revolt of the "gilets jaunes" — yellow vests — has shaken the rulers in France. These are working people and small proprietors from small towns and rural areas who have borne the burden of years of being hit over and over by the effects of today's crisis of capitalist production and trade.

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'Militant': Take story of yellow vest movement to US workers

As readers look over the coverage and pictures of the yellow vest protests in France on the front page of this week's *Militant*, we think you'll see yourself.

EDITORIAL

Workers, farmers, small shop owners, young and old, native-born and immigrant, demanding "dignity for all." In short, the French equivalent of those the
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Workers face capitalist disdain in wake of wildfire social catastrophe



Militant/Eric Simpson

SWP member Joel Britton, left, talks with carpenter Tony Worino in his RV at fire refugee center in Chico, Calif. "How do the rich control everything and manipulate us?" Worino asked.

BY JEFF POWERS

CHICO, Calif. — Since firefighters declared the Camp Fire 100 percent contained, the extent of the social catastrophe that accompanied the blaze — a product of the dog-eat-dog capitalist profit system — is becoming clearer. The catastrophe took the lives

of over 80 people, burned 153,000 acres, forced over 50,000 people to flee, destroyed 14,000 houses, and almost completely obliterated the towns of Paradise, Magalia and Concow.

Many of those who lost their homes and belongings took refuge in Chico,
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Kaiser health care workers strike over heavy workload

BY ERIC SIMPSON

SAN FRANCISCO — Some 4,000 mental health care workers at Kaiser Permanente hospitals and clinics across California began a strike Dec. 10 that is set to last five days.

The National Union of Healthcare Workers and their supporters mounted a spirited picket line outside the Kaiser Permanente San Francisco Medi-
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‘Yellow vests’ win gains, dignity

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Backpedaling in hopes of quelling the protests, French President Emmanuel Macron announced Dec. 10 an increase in the minimum wage and the repeal or easing of some taxes on workers and retirees. But many protesters said it was too little, too late.

“It has been going on for a long time but it’s erupting now because Macron thinks we’re fools,” 75-year-old Daniel Bensept, a yellow vest protester in Troyes, told the *Financial Times*. “He takes us for people who are worth nothing.”

While protests in Paris have been the focus of the big-business media, hundreds of thousands have mobilized in the small towns and countryside. They’ve camped out at traffic circles, set up road blocks to ask for support and taken over toll booths, letting drivers pass without paying.

The yellow vests exploded on the scene Nov. 17 in opposition to a new gas tax imposed on top of already rising diesel prices — supposedly aimed at fighting “global warming” by discouraging people from driving their cars. French workers are required by law to keep yellow vests in their cars in case of problems. More than a quarter million joined the protests, blocking traffic in more than 2,000 locations that day.

For a wealthy Parisian “none of this is an issue, because he doesn’t need a car,” truck and cab driver Marco Pavan, from Besancon, a small town near the Swiss border, told the *Washington Post* Dec. 1. “We live on the side of a mountain. There’s no bus or train to take us anywhere. We have to have a car.”

For many, if not most, of the yellow

vests, it was the first time they had ever joined a protest. They were incensed that the Macron government hiked the tax on gas, while earlier cutting taxes on the rich. They called Macron the “president of the rich.”

“Why do the little people have to pay, but the big dogs pay nothing?” Pavan said.

Many workers with jobs say they don’t have enough money to take a vacation or even to eat out occasionally. For many, their income runs out before the end of the month. “I am skipping lunch so that my son can eat,” Berangere Gabriel, 34, told the *Christian Science Monitor*. She is unemployed and survives on about \$800 a month in government assistance.

‘A moral crisis’

“This crisis is deep and it’s not just economic. It’s moral,” Mathilde Pouzet, a child care worker from Ville-neuve-la-Garenne, north of Paris, told The Associated Press Dec. 7.

While much of the anger is directed at Macron, the yellow vests are disgusted with all capitalist parties and institutions. “I didn’t want this completely corrupt political class anymore,” Olivier Laurin, 39, a landscaping worker from Montlucon, told the *Wall Street Journal*.

The popular movement has no structured leadership or organization. Discussions, debate and acts of solidarity mark the smaller cities and rural areas across the French countryside.

The ruling rich and their meritocratic government think Paris is all that counts in France, so thousands of yellow vests converged on Paris Nov. 24, Dec. 1 and 8, where they were at-



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Yellow vest protesters stop truck Dec. 11 in Dieppe, a coastal town in Normandy region of northern France. Cars and buses were allowed to pass. “Macron thinks those who labor are dumb,” protester Nathalie Girard told U.K. Communist League member Debra Jacobs, “but the opposite is the case. The work we do — that’s intelligence, that’s creativity.”

tacked by thousands of cops using tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons. On Dec. 4 the government announced it was suspending the fuel tax increase. But the yellow vests kept coming.

Oil refineries were blockaded Dec. 8, shopping centers closed and supply chains disrupted by roadblocks nationwide, as the protests continued to shake the country. The government shut down the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre and a dozen other museums, the city’s three main department stores, and the Paris Opera as part of a campaign to violence-bait the yellow vests. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire called the protests a “catastrophe” for the French economy.

High school students join in

The protesters’ demands have expanded to express their broad disgust with a system that devastates them and their families. The movement has drawn in high school and college students. The main national union federations have opposed the protests, charging falsely they’re infiltrated and influenced by the far right. But some local union chapters have joined in the yellow vest actions.

Officials of seven of France’s main union federations issued a joint statement Dec. 6 echoing the rulers’ bait-

ing of the yellow vests, rejecting “all forms of violence in the expression of demands.” Instead, they called for “real social dialogue” in “our country.”

High school students protested at some 300 high schools in support of the yellow vests and against discriminatory education “reforms” introduced by the Macron government. These measures make it harder for working-class and rural students to get into universities.

A video of 150 high school students from Mantes-la-Jolie, a working-class suburb of Paris, forced by riot police to kneel with hands behind their heads provoked widespread outrage.

Yellow vest participants all over the country gathered at roadblocks and elsewhere to listen to Macron’s Dec. 10 speech. The French president promised the government would fund a 100-euro increase (\$114) in the minimum wage per month at the start of the new year; abolish taxes on overtime pay in 2019; “ask” profitable companies to give out a tax-free year-end bonus; and cut a tax hike on small pensions, which he acknowledged was “unjust.”

But the former investment banker never said the words “yellow vest” once in his entire speech.

The protests continue.

The Militant

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant’s* views. These are expressed in editorials.

THE MILITANT

Oppose Moscow’s assault on Ukraine sovereignty

The capitalist rulers in Moscow have engaged in a series of attacks on Ukraine and its sovereignty. Most recently their forces seized Ukrainian naval ships and blocked access to the Sea of Azov. The ‘Militant’ explains why workers’ interests lie in opposing Moscow’s assaults.



Russian tanker blocks access to Sea of Azov during Moscow’s seizure of Ukrainian ships.

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☐ \$20 for 6 months

☐ \$35 for 1 year

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New readers: Join Socialist Workers Party in campaigning!

Continued from front page

The SWP exceeded its fall Party-Building Fund drive quota, raising over \$104,000 for the work of the party. Every branch went over 100 percent.

There were five books on special — *Are They Rich Because They're Smart?* *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record*, and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, all by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes; *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* by SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters; and *"It's the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US 'Justice' System": The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class*. These books explain the revolutionary working-class perspective working people need today.

They give a broader picture of the crisis wracking the capitalist system, the carnage this is creating for workers and farmers worldwide, and the road forward to build a working-class movement strong and united enough to take political power.

And they show that history teaches it is possible for working people to transform themselves in struggle to become capable not only to take power, but to rule in the interests of the vast majority. That's why the drive was projected to couple sales of *Militant* subscriptions with equal numbers of book sales.

As we begin the 2019 SWP election campaigns that norm will be a key part of running against the bosses' parties.

On to SWP 2019 campaigns

The SWP will be launching campaigns for governor in Kentucky, as well as mayor and other municipal offices across the country in 2019. These will be a perfect opportunity for the party to speak as tribunes of the people, backing the struggles of all the oppressed and exploited. To push outwards to reach more and more members of our class and its rural allies, to introduce the party, its books and the *Militant*.

We want to take to workers in city and countryside the inspiring example of the yellow vest rebellion of the "deplorables" all across provin-

cial France. The *Militant* tells how they've won concessions, but are protesting for more. Those involved in this new "pitchfork rebellion," and those in many countries who see their own conditions in this fight, can learn from the great proletarian revolutions in Russia and Cuba. The SWP models itself on the parties that led those revolutions uniting the working class and the rural poor to take political power.

The SWP first turned decisively toward introducing the party to workers on their doorsteps in city and town, as the axis of its work, in Wisconsin in 2011. After taking part in public workers' protests in Madison, the state capital, where union officials were trying to tie workers' fate to the Democrats and the rulers' two-party system, SWP members turned to fanning out across the state.

In this way the party deepened its activity in the working class, engaging workers in an undifferentiated way in discussion on how to meet the attacks we face from the bosses and their government, and to build a working-class movement independent of the capitalists' parties and their state.

As part of campaigning to get the SWP presidential ticket on the ballot in 2016, SWP supporters in Minnesota campaigned door to door in every corner of the state, in towns, big and small — 48 cities and towns in all.

Campaigning this way, week in and week out, is at the heart of building a proletarian party today.

"There was a lot of interest this fall in the politics presented in the books by party leaders," Maggie Trowe, the circulation drive's director, wrote to the *Militant* Dec. 11. "These powerful books, coupled with the weekly paper, open the door to follow up with regular discussions and possibilities for common activities with new readers."

"When we put the 2016 SWP presidential ticket of Alyson Kennedy and Osborne Hart on the ballot in Tennessee, New Jersey, Utah, Minnesota, Vermont, Washington and other states," Trowe wrote, "we took ambitious goals on book sales side-by-side with goals for *Militant* subscriptions. We made the twin goals in every case,

helping to politicize the campaign and win partisans to the party."

It was out of this experience the party decided to combine campaigning with both the books and the paper at the center of our circulation drives.

This weekly column on the exchanges between SWP members and workers we meet campaigning door to door will continue. We welcome reports from readers on how workers describe what they face today as well as discussions that lead to building the working-class movement, increasing solidarity and class-consciousness.

To join in, contact the SWP or Communist League nearest you (see directory on page 8).

John Studer is the editor of the *Militant*.



Militant Socialist Workers Party member Helen Meyers speaks with Ramón Cuellar at his trailer in Roseville, Minnesota, Oct. 21, as he signs up for subscription to *Militant*. "I have to work two jobs," he said. "I'm all for what you are doing." He also got a copy of *The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record*.

Join May Day International Volunteer Work Brigade to Cuba — April 22 - May 5

Meet workers and farmers from across the island; participate in voluntary agricultural work; join hundreds of thousands at Havana annual May Day march.

The brigade is sponsored by the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP). U.S. contingent is being organized by National Network on Cuba.



To apply: Email: ICanGoToCuba@nnoc.info Applications are due by March 29

Socialist Workers Party Fund Drive
Oct. 6 - Dec. 4 (Final)

| Area | Quota | Collected | % |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Albany | \$6,000 | \$6,594 | 110% |
| Atlanta | \$9,500 | \$9,750 | 103% |
| Chicago | \$11,000 | \$11,411 | 104% |
| Dallas | \$2,500 | \$3,075 | 123% |
| Lincoln | \$225 | \$227 | 101% |
| Los Angeles | \$10,000 | \$11,452 | 115% |
| Louisville | \$800 | \$1,237 | 155% |
| Miami | \$3,500 | \$3,612 | 103% |
| New York | \$14,000 | \$14,152 | 101% |
| N. New Jersey | \$2,500 | \$3,323 | 133% |
| Oakland | \$12,500 | \$12,505 | 100% |
| Philadelphia | \$3,000 | \$3,170 | 106% |
| Pittsburgh* | \$1,200 | \$1,325 | 110% |
| Seattle | \$10,000 | \$10,439 | 104% |
| Twin Cities* | \$4,800 | \$5,444 | 113% |
| Washington, DC | \$5,500 | \$5,505 | 100% |
| Other | | \$1,200 | |
| Total | \$100,000 | \$104,421 | 104% |

*raised quota

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by Jack Barnes
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Are They Rich Because They're Smart?
Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism
by Jack Barnes

The Clintons' Anti-Working-Class Record
Why Washington Fears Working People
by Jack Barnes

Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?
A Necessary Debate Among Working People
by Mary-Alice Waters

"It's the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US 'Justice' System"
The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class.

\$7 EACH WITHOUT SUBSCRIPTION

To subscribe or purchase books at these prices, contact Socialist Workers Party or Communist League branches listed on page 8.

Keep up pressure against Florida prison censorship!

BY SETH GALINSKY

After impounding seven issues in one 10-week stretch earlier this year, Florida prison officials have eased off on their censorship against the *Militant*. This isn't because of any change in the socialist newsweekly's political coverage of working-class politics and protests worldwide.

It is because of the impact of public attention and protests by Amnesty International USA, PEN America, the National Coalition Against Censorship, the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida and other groups and individuals. The Sept. 17 issue of the paper was the last one to be impounded. As far as the *Militant* is aware, none of the 13 issues since then have been censored.

One prisoner, whose papers had been blocked, informed the *Militant* Dec. 3 that authorities have started delivering the paper again, although some issues that weren't banned still have not been turned over to him.

"Thanks for your support and magnificent work in bringing news to those who've had their freedom taken away from them," he wrote. "I wish you a successful new year, beginning with continuing the fight against the censoring of our newspaper."

The fight is certainly not over.

Starting in April 2017, and over the next year and a half, Florida prison officials impounded 20 issues of the paper on groundless charges. One ban earlier this year said, "ALL PAGES DISCUSS PROTEST."

Fifteen of the impoundments were overturned after the *Militant* appealed, but five were upheld, with no explanation. "We need to keep up the pressure," said *Militant* editor John Studer. "Prison authorities need to know that violations of the rights of workers behind bars as well as the *Militant* will be widely publicized and fought."

The Florida prison system's Literature Review Committee initially told the *Militant* they had upheld the ban on the Sept. 17 issue. But after it received protest letters, the committee claimed that it had overturned the ban, but forgot to tell the *Militant* or the paper's prison subscribers.

Dean Peterson, head of the review committee, said that when the *Militant's* lawyer had appealed the ban, the committee forgot it had overturned it. They then upheld the ban. When they realized their "mistake," he said, they decided it wouldn't be right to "penalize" the *Militant* for appealing the overturned ban, so they reversed their decision upholding a ban they had already rescinded.

The Florida Phoenix internet news site reported Dec. 5 on the *Militant's* fight against censorship, quoting from

recent letters to the Literature Review Committee from the National Coalition Against Censorship and the Florida ACLU.

The Phoenix reported it had also investigated censorship of books in Florida prisons and "found some startling discrepancies between what the guidelines say and how government censors have ultimately ruled on certain pieces of material."

Among the banned books are five volumes of *Game of Thrones*, *Innocent Man* by John Grisham, and *The Simpson's Rainy Day Fun Book* by cartoonist Matt Groening. *Fifty Shades of Gray* and some issues of *Playboy* magazine were allowed. Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow* was taken off Florida's banned books list only after the ACLU there protested.

The monthly *Prison Legal News* is appealing its ban in Florida state prisons to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Restrictions in Pennsylvania

In September Pennsylvania officials imposed rules limiting prisoners' access to books, periodicals and letters on the pretext of stopping drug smuggling. Prisoners would no longer be able to order books or periodicals directly from publishers. They would have to apply to prison officials, get their approval and then have 48 hours to pay in full.

All letters — except from their lawyers — are sent to a processing center in Florida. The original is kept on file and a scan of the letter, if approved for delivery, is sent to each prison to be printed out for inmates.

After protests from family members and civil liberties and prisoner rights groups, Pennsylvania officials last month relaxed some of the new rules on publications, but not on letters. Prisoners can order books and magazines, but they must be sent to a central state screening facility before delivery. Newspapers like the *Militant* can be sent directly to subscribers.

On Dec. 4, 25 musicians, writers and artists wrote to Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf and called on him to reverse all the restrictions. "Every person has

Puerto Rico unions protest gov't health care cuts



Movimiento Independiente Nacional Hostosiano / Víctor Birriel

More than 1,000 members of public workers unions in the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico marched in San Juan Dec. 5 to oppose the slashing of government payments for medical insurance by some \$350 a month. Workers — still reeling from the catastrophe of Hurricane Maria — will have to make up the difference.

"You can't put a price tag on the health of workers and their families," Ángel Figueroa Jaramillo, president of the electrical workers union, UTIER, told the crowd. The action was backed by the main union federations on the island.

Gov. Ricardo Rosselló cynically says that the bite out of workers' income can be "mitigated" if all the unions negotiate pricing with the insurance companies.

The latest attack on workers' living standards is part of a package of measures, some imposed on the initiative of the Puerto Rican government headed by Rosselló, and others on the orders of the Financial Oversight and Management Board. The board was appointed by former President Barack Obama and vested with the authority to dictate economic policy in the U.S. colony.

The cuts are aimed at making workers pay for the capitalist economic crisis, to protect the profits of local and U.S. capitalists, and to maximize payments to bondholders on Puerto Rico's \$74 billion debt.

The governor tried to portray himself as a friend of workers by paying government employees the traditional Christmas bonus — considered a part of workers' annual income — despite opposition from the oversight board. But earlier in the year the Puerto Rico government slashed the bonus by two-thirds, and capped its maximum payout at \$600. And it doubled the minimum number of work hours needed to qualify.

— SETH GALINSKY

a right to read what they please, and to correspond freely with their loved ones," they wrote. "The protections in the Bill of Rights don't end at the jailhouse gate, and unchecked prison censorship and surveillance make all of us less free." Among the signers were members of the music groups Upstate, Lula Wiles, Felice Brothers, Twisted Pine and Driftwood Soldier.

The victories overturning impoundments of the *Militant* in Florida and against some of the restrictions in Pennsylvania — along with the overwhelming passage of Florida Constitutional

Amendment 4 in restoring voting rights to more than a million ex-prisoners — show that working people oppose violations of our rights no matter what side of the prison walls we're on.

"Workers behind bars and workers outside of prison have common interests," Studer said. "We all have the same right to think for ourselves, to discuss and debate issues of importance to the working class, and to speak out in the interests of the exploited and oppressed around the world."

"Keep those letters to Florida officials coming," Studer said.

Dallas cop charged with murder for killing Botham Jean

BY GEORGE CHALMERS

DALLAS — Cop Amber Guyger was charged with murder Nov. 30 in the shooting here of 26-year-old Botham Jean on Sept. 6.

Guyger, who entered Jean's apartment as he was watching football, shot him twice. She claimed the killing was a tragic error, that she went into the apartment by mistake and took him for an intruder. She lives on the floor directly below in the same downtown building.

Other residents told authorities they heard the cop yelling for Jean to let her in and then shooting him without any notice.

Guyger was charged with manslaughter three days after the killing. She was fired by Dallas police after weeks of protests. The case was brought to a grand jury in November, which upped the charge to murder. After being booked, Guyger posted \$200,000 bail, in addition to \$300,000 on the original charge, and was released.

Botham Jean was from St. Lucia in the Caribbean and worked in Dallas as an accountant. He was also a part-time preacher and song leader at the Dallas West Church of Christ. Fifteen hundred people attended his memorial service in Richardson, Texas, Sept. 13.

Allison Jean, Botham Jean's mother, told the press that she knew her son was a victim of murder "from the very start."

Jean's mother is a former government official in St. Lucia. When his body was returned to the island nation for burial, the memorial meeting was full, with a crowd standing outside in his honor.

The *Dallas Morning News* reported this appears to be only the second time in at least 45 years that a Dallas cop has been charged with murder. The last time was in 1973 when officer Darrell Cain put 12-year-old Santos Rodriguez in handcuffs and played Russian roulette with him until Cain's gun shot the youth in the head.

The killing provoked widespread pro-

tests, strengthening the Chicano rights movement across the country. Cain was convicted, but served only half of a five-year sentence.

Dallas County District Attorney Faith Johnson said it would be at least a year before Guyger goes on trial.

This author and other members of the Socialist Workers Party here discuss the murder of Botham Jean with workers as we knock on doors to introduce the party and its literature. "Murder was the charge, but knowing the Dallas police, if she is convicted they will find a way to make it manslaughter, or a lesser charge," Dwight Vaughn told us. "She pretended like she thought it was her apartment but she knew which one she was going in. It's up to a jury, but to me it looks like premeditated murder."

"I think the grand jury charge of murder is very appropriate," John Davis from West Dallas told us. "Because she has a badge she drew her gun and shot."

Join fight against prison censorship!

Get out the word. Distribute copies of *Militant* articles on this fight.

Get statements of support from unions, churches and defenders of workers rights and free speech. Send to: themilitant@mac.com

Send a check to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018, earmarked "Prisoners Rights Fight."

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Chicago charter teachers win strike for higher pay, smaller classes

CHICAGO — Teachers and staff at Acero charter schools here celebrated a victory Dec. 9 after a five-day strike. “Today our students and families have won — bottom line,” Chicago Teachers Union staff member Andy Cooks told the gathering. A tentative agreement was announced that morning.

Some 500 teachers and staff had walked out at the 15 Acero schools Dec. 4 after seven months of contract talks. It is the first time that teachers have gone on strike at a charter school system.

At the celebration many of some 450 charter and public schools teachers, parents, along with students and supporters wore red, the popular color of the shirts worn by teachers during protests last spring in several statewide actions.

After the rally, Jack Peterson, a public school teacher for 25 years, told the *Militant*, “I have never been so proud to be a teacher. Teachers started to stand up and fight, starting with the teachers in West Virginia. We are just beginning.”

The teachers’ main demands included smaller class sizes and raises to bring their pay more in line with teachers and staff at Chicago Public Schools. Teachers at the Acero network unionized in 2013, and are part of the charter school division of the Chicago Teachers Union. They won their first contract in 2014.

In a news release, Acero said they had agreed to pay raises, reduced class sizes, and to the union’s demand to shorten the school year to more closely align with the public schools.

The big majority of Acero students are Latino. The general counsel for the union said the new contract will also prohibit Acero from distributing information about the immigration status of students, teachers and families.

During the strike, teacher Martha Baumgarten told ABC News, “We are asking for equal pay for equal work. Our staff works 20 percent longer over the school year than CPS staff but we get paid an average of 15 percent less.”

“We have 32 students in a class, at all age levels, and it’s too much,” Gabriela Morales, a kindergarten paraprofessional, told the *Militant* on a picket line the

first day of the strike.

Another striker said, “We don’t have a library. We share the gym, playground and cafeteria between three schools. There are kids doing gym in their regular classroom, next to the desks.”

Strikers picketed the schools every morning and organized rallies at Acero’s downtown headquarters, the Chicago Board of Education and elsewhere.

—Nadine Carr

Shipyard workers in Liverpool organize ‘rolling’ strike actions

LIVERPOOL, England — Shipyard workers, members of the Unite and GMB unions, walked out of the Cammell Laird shipyard here Nov. 23 and began “rolling” strike actions. On Dec. 7 they decided to suspend the strikes for four weeks to conduct a new round of talks with the bosses. The workers are protesting the shipyard bosses’ announcement of plans to cut 291 jobs, about 40 percent of the workforce. Different sections of the yard, up to 100 workers at a time, walked out.

Picketing laborers and riggers told the *Militant* Nov. 28 that the strike was having an impact. The bosses told BBC they had already lost £1.5 million (\$1.9 million) because of the action.

“This is about moves to kill the union,” said GMB union organizer Albie McGuigan. The company ordered the layoffs even though it had signed contracts to build and maintain ships for



Militant

Teachers picket Acero charter schools in Chicago Dec. 4 during victorious five-day strike. Teachers won smaller class sizes, pay raises, better working conditions and prohibition against Acero giving out information on immigration status of students, teachers and families.

the Royal Navy worth £619 million.

As workers who weren’t part of the strike left work, they sounded their horns and flashed thumbs up as they passed the picket line.

Union officials say the bosses’ goal is to replace those let go with agency workers. “Since the last round of job cuts over two years ago,” Unite regional officer Ross Quinn told the press, “We have seen more and more agency workers on ‘flexible’ contracts.”

These workers — most of whom are originally from Romania and Poland — are paid £9 an hour, as opposed to the

£14 paid to full-time company workers.

Big-business papers like the *Sun*, published in London, wrote about this in a way aimed at stoking divisions between the two groups of workers. The union officials haven’t proposed any steps to organize or fight for the same wages and conditions for the agency workers.

A few miles away at the Vauxhall Ellesmere Port car plant, 1,100 workers held a wildcat strike Nov. 23 after hearing that bosses plan to cut 241 jobs. There already were three earlier rounds of job cuts at the plant.

—Pete Clifford

Kaiser Health care workers strike over work load

Continued from front page

cal Center, pressing their demands for more staff and better patient care. Their contract, which covers psychologists, therapists and clinical social workers, expired in September.

Members of the California Nurses Association, who have also fought Kaiser for more staffing, joined the picket line in solidarity.

The clinicians are upset with crammed-full appointment schedules and long wait times for their patients. “Don’t deny my patients mental health care,” and “Let me treat addiction” were

demands on picketers’ signs.

Union members want more time to prepare for patients and timely follow-up appointments. They want to force Kaiser to hire more mental health clinicians. They demand wage increases to compensate for a five-year wage freeze.

In full-page ads in Bay Area newspapers, Kaiser bosses counter that they have hired 500 new therapists since 2015. To make up for inadequate staffing Kaiser outsources mental health services, defending the practice as “ensuring access to care for our patients.”

But the bosses’ real aim is to undercut union jobs, affecting the quality of care. Defending speedup, the ads say that the union “wants to reduce the amount of time caregivers spend seeing patients.”

“Our patients are desperate and it takes too long to get them in,” Alia Prince, a licensed clinical social worker who works with patients with postpartum depression at Kaiser in Santa Rosa, told the *San Francisco Chronicle*. “They sometimes wait a month.”

In 2014 Kaiser agreed to pay \$4 million in fines to the California Department of Managed Health Care to settle an 18-month fight with state officials over how the company had prevented patients from getting timely access to medical services.

Kaiser Permanente is the third largest so-called nonprofit health care organization in the United States, employing 218,000 workers. It operates in eight states and the District of Columbia.

Wearing a sky-blue UNITE HERE Local 2 windbreaker, Nicholas Javier was delighted to see Socialist Workers Party member Joel Britton marching in solidarity with the strikers on the picket line. Britton was wearing a “One job should be enough” union button he had gotten at the recent Local 2 strike against Marriott hotels in the Bay Area. A server at Marriott’s Westin St. Francis hotel, Javier said he had rushed down to support the health workers strike as soon as he finished his shift. Co-worker Jose Zepeda did the same.

“These folks stood with us, especially during the last week of our strike,” Javier said. The Marriott strikers ended their two-month strike in San Francisco Dec. 3. “When you stand with Local 2, we stand with you.” Among the contract provisions successfully defended from Marriott’s cutback demands was their Kaiser health plan.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 27, 1993

Washington manipulated its economic might to shove concessions down the throats of Paris and Tokyo as the world trade talks under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade closed December 15. After caving in to U.S. demands to reduce agricultural subsidies, French prime minister Edouard Balladur and governments grouped in the European Community defied pressures to give up more.

The Clinton administration clinched its demands on agriculture. Both Tokyo and Seoul agreed under pressure to open their markets to rice imports.

Washington landed blows to its rivals by using the higher productivity and lower wages, relative to its competitors, that the U.S. bosses have achieved through assaulting the working class in the United States. The biggest companies have eliminated 4 million jobs since 1980.



December 27, 1968

A hunger strike was begun Dec. 14 by 36 Mexican political prisoners to protest the new mass jailing of more students that day. The youthful prisoners are living like cattle in Lecumberri Prison. Some estimates of the arrests range as high as 2,000.

The prisoners announced their decision after the mass arrests which followed an attack by police, soldiers and granaderos (riot police) on a student demonstration which was to have occurred Friday. Students who had taken over buses were jailed and hundreds of others were rounded up in random, mass arrests.

The hunger strikers demand: unconditional release of political prisoners; cessation of all police and military repression; guarantees of personal liberties provided in the Mexican Constitution, which has been consistently violated by government forces.



December 25, 1943

President Roosevelt has been compelled to intervene personally in the railroad wage negotiations in a last minute effort to head off the general railroad strike scheduled to begin Dec. 30. All his elaborate boards and arbitration machinery, set up to stymie the wage demands of the railroad workers, have completely broken down and are discredited.

A successful strike or even a strike threat resulting in substantial wage gains will deal another powerful blow to Roosevelt’s fast-waning prestige with labor and his increasingly discredited war labor relations machinery.

The hard-pressed bureaucrats of the Big Five Railroad Brotherhoods, who managed to stall off decisive union action for almost a year, are no doubt anxious to obtain a formula which they can palm off on their membership as “acceptable” settlement.

Working people in Mosul rebuild lives, culture after defeat of Islamic State

‘Christians and Muslims have lived side by side in Iraq for centuries’; population faces government indifference to war-caused hardships

BY PAUL DAVIES
AND CATHARINA TIRSÉN

MOSUL, Iraq — Working people here continue to confront the impact of Islamic State’s three-year reign of terror and the destructive nine-month battle of Mosul that drove out the brutal and reactionary sect. Now they face ongoing Iraqi government indifference to their hardships as they try to rebuild their lives. Relief that IS’s despotic rule is over is mixed with despair at the devastation that remains.

“‘Liberation’ was about destruction more than liberation,” Hussein Abbas Ahmed told us outside the home he recently began repairing in the “old city” here on the west bank of the Tigris River. Now a teacher, Ahmed was formerly an imam at a local mosque. “But I stopped that because I refused IS’s instructions to pray for their fighters,” he said.

His house lay near the ruins of the Great al-Nuri Mosque, where IS proclaimed its caliphate after seizing the city in June 2014. When they were defeated “this street had only two IS fighters living on it and they were abandoning the city,” he said. “But the U.S. and Iraqi forces hit it with airstrikes anyway.”

Ahmed had fled with his family across the river, but like many others was forced to return earlier than he intended. He had to throw together a makeshift home amid the rubble as rents skyrocketed in the east.

“Some people say those of us from the western part of Mosul ‘deserve what we get, because we let IS in,’” he said, explaining that the reactionary forces were not in fact welcomed by most resi-

dents in western Mosul. Islamic State had gained strength by recruiting a layer of former officers from Saddam Hussein’s army and by playing on the U.S.-installed Iraqi government’s discrimination against Sunni Muslims following Hussein’s overthrow.

“Christians and Muslims have lived here side by side for centuries,” Ahmed, a Sunni Muslim, said. “During every Christian festival we would take sweets to their houses and they would do the same when there were Muslim festivals.”

He showed us around the ruins of the abandoned home of a Christian neighbor who had been renowned in the area for her baking. “Muslims and Christians across the town came to buy her baklava for weddings,” he said. “Everyone in the street wishes she would come back.”

A month after seizing the city, Islamic State ordered all Christians to flee or face execution. We were shown the inside of the ruins of the al-Tahira Church near his home. Like other desecrated churches, it was used by the reactionary sect to carry out executions and to store goods that they decided were forbidden and confiscated. IS had carved out all Christian emblems and inscriptions from the walls of the building.

Since 2003 the country’s Christian population, who lived mainly in northern Iraq, has dropped from 1.2 million to 300,000 today.

Hundreds of thousands still in camps

An estimated 1.8 million people who fled IS as its murderous forces swept across Iraq and the Iraqi army crumbled remain refugees today. Some 500,000 of them are accommodated in camps around the country, many with little prospect of returning to their homes.

The widows and orphans of Islamic State fighters are held in special camps, separated from the rest of the population. Some of these children are looked after at the al-Zahour orphanage in Mosul. The orphanage has faced abuse from people who resent the upkeep



Militant photos by Catharina Tirsén

provided to the children, considering them undeserving of basic care. But the workers there believe care should be afforded to all.

With 2.5 million inhabitants, Mosul was the largest Iraqi city captured by the terrorist sect. The door-to-door battle to retake it was waged by Iraqi counterterrorism units and Kurdish peshmerga on the ground, reinforced by massive U.S.-led airstrikes.

More than 800,000 people fled the city and 54,000 homes were destroyed. The densely populated old city was subject to fierce fighting as Iraqi government forces retook it block by block. U.S. airstrikes destroyed all five bridges over the river, cutting residents in the western part of the city off from the rest.

Of the estimated 11,000 deaths in the nine-month battle, Associated Press reports that 3,200 were civilians killed by coalition forces. With callous disregard for the lives of Mosul’s toiling population, Washington still doesn’t acknowledge the size of the death toll.

Fight to regain a life ... and culture

“Today there is no work apart from casual jobs in cleaning and construction, with no guaranteed hours, making it harder for people to come back,” Ahmed said. “And if you go to eastern Mosul the rents are too high even if you have a job.”

The electricity only went back on in June, “but the government has been cutting the hours it is available,” he said. “Most people living here can’t afford their own generator. But those with private generators can profit by selling electricity to those of us without.” Ahmed was one of the volunteers who rewired the electricity on the street where he lives.

Only a tiny proportion of the government’s supposed \$400 million fund for the city’s reconstruction was released in 2017, and none so far this year. Many working people are forced into debt to rebuild their homes. “Where is the mayor?” Ahmed asked. “He has come to west Mosul just once in four years.”

There is a noticeable change in the conditions when you cross the river in the eastern part of the city. Crowds throng around cafes and shops on streets by the University of Mosul. When we stopped at the recently opened Qantara cultural

café, well over 100 people were packed into a room taking part in a boisterous poetry reading with an open mic. Cultural activity of this kind was banned and harshly repressed under Islamic State rule. Such events, forbidden by IS, are now beginning to flourish.

Top, boisterous poetry reading with open mic at Qantara cultural cafe in east Mosul Nov. 30, one of many activities banned under Islamic State that are coming back to life in the city. **Right**, Hussein Abbas Ahmed, a teacher, outside remains of his home in “old city” in west Mosul, large swaths of which were destroyed during the fight against IS, including during indiscriminate U.S.-bombing raids.



Mosul ‘reading festival’ celebrates return of art, literature

BY CATHARINA TIRSÉN
AND PAUL DAVIES

MOSUL, Iraq — More than 1,000 people, including hundreds of youth, participated in the second “reading festival” here since the end of the three-year reign of terror by Islamic State. The Nov. 30 event was a celebration of the defeat of the reactionary group’s occupation and a further step forward for working people as part of an explosion of literary, artistic and other cultural activity that had been forbidden during IS’s rule.

At the festival, 30 bookshelves were lined up behind the makeshift stage, all bearing the name of a high school. In front of each were two big boxes of books.

“These are going to 30 school libraries,” Safwan Al-Madany, one of the organizers of the festival, explained. “The books for the schools

are some of the 10,000 books that were donated. The rest will be sold to the public after the program.”

Nonreligious books had been banned and destroyed under IS’s rule. As part of its campaign to instill terror among working people, Islamic State suppressed any form of expression that didn’t conform to the group’s sectarian views.

It tore down statues of poets and writers and destroyed works of art and musical instruments. Its members smashed religious shrines that were important to Christians, Jews and Muslims alike. They set fire to the Mosul University library, incinerating most of its hundreds of thousands of books, to block working people gaining access to ideas. Thousands of books were rescued by students and other volunteers last year.

Islamic State’s rule was crushed in a nine-month door-to-door battle by

Iraqi government and Kurdish forces backed by U.S. airstrikes that levelled swaths of Mosul.

Second ‘reading festival’

The first reading festival was held outside the burnt library in September 2017, attracting some 4,000 people.

Because of pouring rain this year’s festival was moved from the planned site outside the Mosul Museum in the western part of the city, to a sports arena just across the Tigris River where participants could still see the devastation on the other side. The museum was the last IS stronghold. It sustained the most damage during the battle for Mosul.

The festival included speeches by sponsors, poetry readings and traditional music from the area. The students and professors had come together to clear the rubble at the Faculty of Fine Arts building after the battle. A broken piano keyboard is on display there as a symbol of IS’s war against culture.

Dance depicts defeat of Islamic State

A dance performance put on by art students from the university depicted the recent history of Iraq. In the dance, a ruler becomes more and more despotic and people are driven into the ground. One gets killed and is carried away to a funeral. After the tyrant flees, figures depicting Islamic State appear, with bloodied red arms and half-black faces. They take away a painting displayed on an easel while a man playing the flute hides away his instrument.

Eventually three dancers in white clothes come onto the stage and defeat Islamic State, killing some IS combatants and driving one into the audience where he disappears.

The 1,000-strong audience stood up and cheered as the painting was put back on its easel and the musician played his



Kairosphotos/Paul Jeffrey

Mime performance by Mosul University students Nov. 30 acts out recent history. Dancers in white defeat Islamic State fighters in black, return a painting to view and a musician plays his flute to cheers of the crowd.

Sulaymaniyah students protest campus conditions



Photos by Savan Aki

SULAYMANIYAH, Kurdistan — Around 100 women at the University of Sulaymaniyah breached the college’s 5 p.m. curfew for female students Nov. 23, walking out of their dorms at 11 p.m. to protest living conditions there. The protest continued until midnight with students blocking the main road outside the college, demanding warm water, heaters, cleaning services and the removal of stray dogs from the campus.

Dormitory manager Nazhad Hussein threatened to suspend the students involved. “Now that you are protesting like this, I will bring more dogs,” Hussein is reported to have told the women.

The following day the action spread, growing to 1,000 students, male and female, above, who announced a boycott of their classes. In addition to fighting for decent basic living conditions, the students broadened their demands to include the right to elect their own representatives. Currently they are appointed by political parties on the campus.

Students who live off campus joined those from the dorms, chanting, “Not outsiders, not insiders, we are all students.”

When cops threatened to arrest some protesters, students chanted, “Either take us all, or none of us.” The cops backed off.

Students have faced these demeaning conditions for years. The university administration shut down the dormitories Nov. 25, declared a “vacation,” and pledged to fix the situation. By Dec. 6 college authorities started to provide warm water and heating to the dorms and replaced Hussein as dormitory manager. Students vow they will continue to fight for all their demands.

Students organized to display open umbrellas, along the campus walkways decorated with slogans that read “Dorms ≠ Prison, Dorms = Opening up” and “Student ≠ Robot, Student = Creation.” Among those organizing the protests were the May’68 group and the recently formed “students spontaneous movement.”

— SAVAN AKO

flute again. Their ovation reflected the deeply held appreciation of the revival of cultural life in Mosul today.

Pathfinder Press, a publisher with offices in New York and London, made a donation of books to festival organizers. The books contain the historic lessons of 150 years of working-class struggle. Some were placed in boxes to be given to school libraries. Others were made available for purchase by festivalgoers for 1,000 Iraqi dinars each (85 cents).

Tariq Al-Qassar, director of the political science department at the University of Mosul, also received a donation of books for his department. He had been one of those who selected the books the festival donated to the schools.

In attendance at the festival and invited to join the platform was Haneen Jamal, who in March had opened Qantara, one of the cultural cafes that have been springing up in east Mosul. She told the *Militant* that she is the first woman to ever manage a café here.

The café recently presented the first piano recital by a woman musician in Mosul. Jamal had helped host the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra two months ago when they performed in the city for the first time in years.

“At the beginning it was difficult, and we didn’t know if the café would succeed,” Jamal said, “but now women and men from across the city come to our events. There are people who hate what we do, but we must continue, because music is the food of the soul.”

The Qantara cultural café and the reading festival are just two among many initiatives to revive culture in the war-torn city. More book cafes have opened. Art exhibitions and concerts are being held. In September the “I am Iraqi — I read” festival, held in cities across Iraq, was organized for the first time in Mosul. The title refers to a traditional Arab saying, “Egypt writes, Lebanon publishes, and Iraq reads.” The festival was held in a park where Islamic State once trained children it had forced to become IS soldiers.

Revolution, Counterrevolution and War in Iran: Social and political roots of workers’ protests that swept 90 cities and small towns
by Steve Clark
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Stella Martany

Students at University of Mosul art department keep broken keyboard as reminder of reactionary Islamic State rule in city.

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Lenin: 'I declare war to death on Great Russian chauvinism'

Below are excerpts from *Lenin's Final Fight: Speeches and Writings, 1922-1923*. The first is a memo by Vladimir Lenin to the political bureau of the All-Russian Communist Party, formerly the Bolshevik Party. From chapter two of the book — "The Fight Opens: the National Question and the Voluntary Union of Soviet Republics" — the memo is entitled, "On Combating Great-Power Chauvinism." The second selection is from the introduction by Jack Barnes and Steve Clark. Barnes is the national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party and Clark is managing editor of Pathfinder Press.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Lenin was the central leader of the world's first socialist revolution, the Russian Revolution, from 1917 until his death in January 1924. The book documents what was to be his last political battle in 1922-23. At stake was whether that revolution would remain on the proletarian course that had brought workers and peasants to power, sweeping aside the former czarist empire in 1917.

One of the central issues was Lenin's fight to win the leadership of the party to defend the right of oppressed nations to self-determination and equality, ensuring a *voluntary union* of Soviet republics. Lenin's note below proposes a measure to resist the encroaching influ-



V.I. Lenin, central leader of 1917 Russian Revolution, at left in front, with delegates at 1920 Second Congress of Communist International. He led 1922-23 fight to defend national rights of oppressed peoples long encased in czardom's prison house of nations, like toilers in Ukraine.

ence of the Great Russian bureaucracy. Lenin also supported language-rights movements in the oppressed nations and nationalities, such as the Ukrainization of Ukraine, to advance equal status between the Soviet Republics. After Lenin's death, Joseph Stalin consolidated power at the head of a bloody political counterrevolution that reversed Lenin's course of proletarian internationalism. Copyright © 1995 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



BY VLADIMIR LENIN

Memo to the Political Bureau
October 6, 1922

I declare war to the death on Great Russian chauvinism. I shall eat it with all my healthy teeth as soon as I get rid of this accursed bad tooth. It must be *absolutely* insisted that the union Central Executive Committee should be *presided over* in turn by a Russian,

Ukrainian,
Georgian, etc.
Absolutely!
Yours,
Lenin

* * *

BY JACK BARNES AND STEVE CLARK

The Bolshevik-led government sought from the outset to establish a union of proletarian Russia and the oppressed peoples long encased

within the old tsarist prison house of nations across Europe and Asia. But that goal could only be achieved by the *voluntary* action of those peoples, whose unconditional right to national self-determination was recognized by the new government.

The Soviet congress in January 1918 established the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) "leaving it to the workers and peasants of each nation to decide independently at their own authoritative congress of soviets whether they wish to participate in the federal government. . . and on what terms."

By late 1922, twenty-one autonomous republics and regions had been established within the RSFSR itself, and the revolutionary government was collaborating with soviet republics in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belorussia, Georgia, and Ukraine to form what in December 1922 would become the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Lenin, however, objected to Stalin's initial draft of a Central Committee resolution, which negated the Bolsheviks' long-standing proletarian internationalism by calling for "*entry*" of these other republics into the *Russian* federation.

"We consider ourselves, the Ukrainian SSR, and others equal," Lenin wrote in a September 1922 letter to the party's Political Bureau, and "enter with them on an equal basis into a new union, a

new federation, the Union of the Soviet Republics of Europe and Asia."

In a note to the Political Bureau the following day, Stalin acquiesced to an amended form of this proposal and several other of "Comrade Lenin's unimportant amendments," as he called them. Stalin's note dismissively referred to Lenin's uncompromising opposition to Great Russian chauvinism as the "national liberalism of Comrade Lenin."

Two months later Lenin was outraged to discover that Central Committee member Grigory Ordzhonikidze, in the presence of another CC member, Aleksey Rykov, had physically struck a Communist from Georgia during a dispute over national rights. In Lenin's late December letter to the upcoming party congress, he wrote that the Bolsheviks' support for the right of national self-determination "will be a mere scrap of paper" if the party is "unable to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great Russian chauvinist, in substance a scoundrel and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is."

And Lenin concluded: "That is why internationalism on the part of oppressors or 'great' nations, as they are called (though they are great only in their violence, only great as bullies), must consist not only in the observance of the formal equality of nations but even in an inequality, through which the oppressor nation, the great nation, would compensate for the inequality which obtains in real life. Anybody who does not understand this has not grasped the real proletarian attitude to the national question; he is still essentially petty bourgeois in his point of view and is, therefore, sure to descend to the bourgeois point of view."

In early March 1923, Lenin, who knew he was too ill to attend the upcoming Central Committee meeting later that month, wrote Trotsky with an "earnest request that you should undertake the defense of the Georgian case in the party CC. This case is now under 'persecution' by Stalin and [Feliks] Dzerzhinsky, and I cannot rely on their impartiality." Trotsky did so but, as recorded later in these pages, the motion he placed before the Central Committee was defeated.

December
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OF THE MONTH

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Join ‘Militant’ telling yellow vest story

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capitalist bosses and their meritocratic servants in the U.S. call the “deplorables.”

We’re asking readers to join in taking the *Militant’s* coverage of the protests to workers and young people in cities, towns and rural areas across the country. The inspiring reports on their actions, and their refusal to be bought off by “president of the rich” Emmanuel Macron, will be welcome news.

The French rulers had no idea this was bubbling beneath the surface in the suburbs and small towns across the country. They viewed the “people from nowhere” as incapable of such a rebellion. Now they fear them.

The same thing is bubbling elsewhere, wherever workers and farmers face the carnage from the decline of the capitalist system today, its economic, political and moral crisis. You can see it in the United Kingdom, where workers say the country should break out of the European Union, or in distorted forms in elections in Italy and elsewhere as workers try to find a way to register hatred for all the rulers’ parties and their disdain for our problems. It’s the same in the U.S.

Like the yellow vests, we refuse to accept the trampling of our rights, the decline of our living conditions, their wars abroad that leave our youth broken, their blows at our humanity.

In fact it’s working people in the small towns and

the countryside in states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin and Indiana who have been the hardest hit as the bosses and their government try to place the capitalist crisis of production, trade and declining rates of profit on our backs.

We live under the dictatorship of capital. To maintain their rule, the capitalists try to convince us they are rich because they’re smart. They try to divide us by nationality, religion, sex, unemployed vs. employed. And urban dwellers from those in rural areas.

But the road to overturn their dictatorship is to unite the working classes in city and countryside. The revolt of the yellow vests gives a glimpse of what’s possible.

Join us knocking on doors in small towns and rural areas to build that alliance. Introduce working people there to the *Militant* and to books by leaders of the Socialist Workers Party — *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?*; *The Clintons’ Anti-Working-Class Record*; *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?*; *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*. Also included is the book of interviews with five Cuban revolutionaries, *It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System.*”

These books are worth reading and studying. Contact the Socialist Workers Party and Communist League branch nearest you to get them — at a discount if you’re a new subscriber. Join a team today.

Workers face capitalist disdain in fire catastrophe

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the nearest town that hadn’t been torched. Shelters and camps were set up where thousands got housing and hundreds of workers and students volunteered to provide food and aid.

On Dec. 7 a team of Socialist Workers Party members from Oakland expressed solidarity and met workers at the Silver Dollar Fairgrounds. It’s the only Red Cross shelter in the area and home to 500 people.

RVs and cars with people living in them dot the parking lot. Carpenter Tony Worino, 63, welcomed the SWP campaigners into his RV. “My clients for finish carpentry have all been burned out,” he told us, saying he would have to move.

“How do so few people control everything and manipulate us?” he asked. “For the rich we are just consumers.”

“Working people face a dictatorship of capital,” SWP member Joel Britton said. “But we have the numbers and the capacity to wage struggles to rebuild a fighting labor movement and fight for a workers and farmers government.”

We also met Ramiro Ariaz Jr., who is living in a pickup truck. “It’s hard living here. Lunch was yogurt, a fruit cup and an apple,” he said. “I applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency three or four times and they haven’t given me anything.”

FEMA officials made a big deal Dec. 6 about how they were bringing housing to an RV park outside of Corning. It turned out to be a grand total of 12 trailers.

Knocking on doors in Chico

We also knocked on workers’ doors in Chico.

“There was only a 1 percent vacancy rate in town before the fire,” building maintenance worker Kenny Hicks said. “There is hardly any place available to rent. This is a college town — California State University is here. When the students vacate their apartments this summer they’re going to be snapped up by people who lost their homes in the fire. There will be no place for the students when they return.”

We met Julie Whited at the front door of a nearby house. She was living in Paradise when the fire broke out. She lost everything. Whited is a counselor at the Catalyst women’s shelter in Chico, where she’s worked for 20 years. Friends in town gave her a place to stay.

“I work nights and went to bed at 4 a.m., so I was asleep when my son called on the morning of the fire,” she said. “I thought it was still night because it was black outside. He told me I had to leave. I grabbed a few things and drove out of town.”

“I don’t have renters’ insurance. I applied to

FEMA for help. I’m lucky, they got back to me fairly quickly and cut me a check for \$894 for rental assistance,” she said.

Whited and other workers at the women’s shelter organized to join the Communications Workers of America union. “After we got the union, my wages immediately went up. I had been working eight hours a night but they had only been paying us for five. They said we were sleeping and we didn’t deserve the money,” she said. “The union got back pay for us, plus more money per day.” The union is also helping with emergency relief she said.

Whited and Evan Shuman, an agricultural worker in the neighborhood, got subscriptions to the *Militant*. Shuman also bought *Is Socialist Revolution in the US Possible?* by Socialist Workers Party leader Mary-Alice Waters.

A few houses down the street Francisco Bailon, a student at Chico High School, answered the door. “I’m in the choir at school,” he said. “The head of the choir from Paradise High asked if we would be part of a tour he was arranging for high school choirs to tour local towns to bring joy to people hurt by the fire. Everybody volunteered.”

Rebuilding twisted by capitalism

It will be a long, slow and expensive process before homes in Paradise are rebuilt. Everything involved will be twisted and distorted by the profit system.

The land has to be cleared of debris. Builders have to be found and prices agreed to. There is a shortage of construction workers, many who used to live in the area. FEMA will never help workers really recover.

In last year’s Tubbs Fire, in the Santa Rosa area, 5,600 homes were destroyed. So far only 200 have been rebuilt.

Camp Fire began under Pacific Gas and Electric Company’s high-voltage transmission lines, its likely cause. The lines were built in 1919 above the resort town of Pulga close to Paradise. The company reported problems there right before the fire. Some towers on the line were replaced in 2016, but that one was not.

PG&E has been hit by dozens of lawsuits and judgments of millions of dollars over responsibility for recent wildfires. The bosses had judged it better to pay people off than make repairs to aging equipment or keep areas around wires clear of tinder.

The same thing is happening again with Camp Fire. Recently passed laws in California allow PG&E to pass costs from legal judgments along to customers in higher rates. In the last seven years monthly bills for PG&E electricity have soared 46 percent.

US rulers push Beijing

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Beijing since President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping met Dec. 1 during the G-20 conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and agreed to a 90-day “truce” in new tariffs.

Car manufacturers in the U.S. exported 266,000 vehicles to China in 2017. In addition to aiding U.S. auto bosses, the tariff reduction by Beijing would aid foreign auto companies that have plants in the U.S., like BMW and Daimler. Bosses at those companies had been considering moving production out of the U.S.

Competition over production, trade

The arrest of Meng is part of competition over which power will dominate the next wave of smartphone and other high-tech production. Huawei has grown into the biggest supplier of telecommunications gear in the world. While its stock is valued at less than half that of Apple, it has vaulted into second place behind Samsung as a maker of smartphones.

The company is crucial to Beijing’s “Made in China 2025” plan to become a global leader in industries ranging from computer chips to robotics and electric cars. One of the Chinese rulers’ key goals is to lead in “5G,” the next generation of wireless technology. The Huawei company is at the heart of this effort.

Trump made it clear that the detention of Huawei’s chief financial officer is a negotiating piece for the U.S. rulers. “If I think it’s good for what will be certainly the largest trade deal ever made, which is a very important thing,” he told Reuters, “I would certainly intervene if I thought it was necessary.”

“If the U.S. officials and government want to make a positive effort to promote the settlement of the issue, we welcome that,” Beijing foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang responded.

The Chinese government has centered its fire over the arrest of Meng against the Canadian rulers, not against Washington. China is second only to the U.S. as Canada’s top trading partner. Beijing detained former Canadian diplomat Michael Kovrig Dec. 11, days after threatening Ottawa with “serious consequences” for the arrest of the Huawei executive.

Meng was released on bail the same day. She had to post \$7.5 million, is restricted to Vancouver, has to wear an ankle bracelet, and has to pay for a security detachment to go with her everywhere she goes.

US says Meng violated Iran sanctions

Washington accuses Meng of misleading multinational banks over Huawei’s control of a former company, Skycom, which traded in Tehran in breach of Washington’s sanctions against Iran.

The U.S. government and Washington’s spy agencies have combined to ratchet up restrictions on access to military and other government contracts by Huawei and ZTE, another large Chinese tech firm. In April ZTE faced a seven-year ban on procuring U.S. technology components over charges it violated U.S. sanctions in selling banned equipment to Iran and North Korea. ZTE was saved from bankruptcy by a deal President Trump negotiated with Xi in a phone call. ZTE was again allowed to buy U.S.-made parts and paid a hefty fine.

Beijing has countered Meng’s arrest with some steps to restrict Apple products in China. But these are measured steps. Between its manufacturing and distribution arms, plus software development, Apple has an estimated 4.8 million workers in China.

The best computer chips are still U.S.-designed. Without these and other crucial U.S. inputs, the massive outpouring of electronic equipment made in China would be much inferior.

Four of the five countries in the “Five Eyes” intelligence sharing network — the U.S., Britain, Australia and New Zealand — have blocked Huawei from their new 5G cellular networks over “national security” concerns. Canada, the fifth “eye,” has not yet followed suit. Tokyo, another U.S. ally, has announced Huawei and ZTE will not be allowed to fill official contracts.

The trade disputes between Washington and Beijing plus efforts to defend favored national producers, David Zweig wrote in the Dec. 5 *Financial Times*, are “a component of a long struggle between a global hegemon — the US — seeking to maintain its dominance, and an ascending challenger — China — that feels it has a moral right to reclaim its status as a great power.”